



## Think Tanks for Latin America and China Meeting

19-20 October 2017, University of Porto

**Participants Think Tank for Latin America:** Agata Manino (University of Trieste), Anca Kiss (Babes-Bolyai University), Arnim Heinemann (University of Bayreuth), Barbara Claeys (Ghent University), Bárbara Costa (University of Porto), Francisco Vasques (University of Porto), Hilde Skeie (NTNU), Jorge Mota (University of Porto), Mariam Calvo (University of Valladolid), Mariana Sousa (SGroup), Marie Clotuche (University of Liège), Marta Barbosa (University of Porto), Sergio Romeo (University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria)

**Participants Think Tank for China:** Agata Manino (University of Trieste), Arnim Heinemann (University of Bayreuth), Barbara Claeys (Ghent University), Bárbara Costa (University of Porto), Hilde Skeie (NTNU), João Pedro Pêgo (University of Porto), Laurent de Potter (University of Liège), Mariana Sousa (SGroup), Marie Clotuche (University of Liège), Marta Barbosa (University of Porto), Maurizio Viezzi (University of Trieste), Philipp Dengel (Bavarian University Centre for China at Bayreuth University), Phillipe de Mayer (Ghent University; skype conference), Sergio Romeo (University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria)

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## 1. Think Tank for Latin America, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### 1.1. Think Tank Logo

Bárbara Costa started by presenting a proposal for the Think Tank logo. She proposed a common logo that can be used by the SGroup, adaptable to different regions. The versions for China and Latin America were already created; but the logo can expand to other regions, like Africa. The participants liked the idea and Bárbara Costa will present it as a proposal for the rest of the Executive Committee, in the next meeting.

### 1.2. ICon Programme

Bárbara Costa reviewed the story of the ICon Programme, since its launching to its main objectives. She explained that Jorge, from UPorto, developed an online platform with the support of the SGroup, promoting the mobility schemes for academic and administrative staff. However, until the moment, no scholarships were attributed. There was no sustainable structure, neither financial support behind and no incentive to the member Universities.

The Executive Committee decided to award a scholarship with the purpose to launch the Programme. It is expected that this scholarship will allow members to create something new and have a real impact through new collaborations, by establishing realistic goals and outputs, and by developing new initiatives with a clear proposal. In total, 5 scholarships of 1000€ will be awarded for applications for the second semester of 2017-2018.

When Bárbara was explaining the right profile of candidates expected for the programme, Arnim pointed out that many teachers are working under temporary contracts, which should also be considered eligible for these scholarships. Bárbara explained the need to create sustainable relationships and multiplying effects, which need some stability of the involved people. The selection criteria include one candidate per member university, the evaluation by the SGroup Selection Committee and a duration from 7 days to 1 month (with no change in the scholarship amount). The support from the partner University is essential for financing the project. It is mandatory to match the goals with the achievements, which can be presented at the Liaison Officers meeting. These goals should be realistic, but relevant.

Anka referred that, sometimes, Universities may not be able to match the criteria. Barbara Claeys mentioned the challenges with the staff work, but highlighted that different universities must work in different areas, which can present new opportunities for the SGroup.

Arnim also mentioned that the scholarships may be extended for China in the next academic year and asked the participants how the funds should be divided, because they may not necessarily be split equally between the two regions. Bárbara Costa explained that it is important to check the available schemes with the Executive Committee before the allocation of the funds for upcoming years.

Barbara Claeys explained that if the SGroup believes ICon can be a continuous and long-lasting project, few scholarships might restrict its evolution.



### 1.3. New Project Opportunities

Bárbara Costa talked about the current situation in Brazil: even though they are experiencing a fragile economic and political situation, they keep on supporting mobility and even invested in the participation of European speakers in several events.

Besides the importance of the cooperation with FAUBAI and EAIE, there is also the need to look for new opportunities with other networks, in order to establish new partnerships project-oriented.

The European Commission published the 2018 Erasmus+ Annual Work Programme, emphasizing the strong international dimension of the Erasmus+ programme. The new budget is bigger, but it is important to understand how it will be allocated to different scholarships. If, for example, €1000 are targeted at a single institution, the general benefits will not be relevant. Two or more Universities can apply together for one fund (for example, Belgium has a complementary fund: Ghent + Liège + Giessen).

The focus on cooperation for development was also mentioned, in countries like Equator, Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru and Colombia. Sergio, from the University of Las Palmas de Grand Canaria, worked in a project with Asia, cooperating in the development of their curricula.

Bárbara Costa also focused on the funding schemes from Brazil, highly affected by the present social instability. She presented the projects “*Mais Ciência, Mais Desenvolvimento*” (former “*Ciências sem Fronteiras*”), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPQ), the Coordination of Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (CAPES), the Financier of Studies and Projects (FINEP), the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) and the “*Inova Talentos*” Programme, as well as the tax incentive and innovation promotion laws in Brazil.

Sergio mentioned the concept of “Zona Franca” (no taxes area), where the companies allocate part of their funds to the HEIs, supporting their development and sustaining the cooperation.

The confrontation between an economic perspective and cooperation between different institutions is also an important challenge, aiming a network of cooperation between larger and smaller institutions.

### 1.4. Latin America Experts Database

Barbara Claeys presented the results of the SGroup’s call for experts. Arnim suggested the creation of a simpler version of the Excel table for the Latin America experts, with a new format that gathers experts from different regions, through a new platform that goes beyond the Think Tanks, with a search engine. Partners should search for info in a common file that gathers the experts from Latin American and China, and even Africa or other regions subsequently added.

Bárbara Costa presented the University of Porto experience by suggesting the inclusion of information sessions in faculties, as new opportunities for finding new experts.



Barbara Claeys believes that SGroup needs to improve the structure and format of the current database before expand it. However, Bárbara Costa proposed a reinforcement right now, to be disclosed to the partners in time to allow them to benefit from this pool of experts for the upcoming Erasmus+ call (to be launched during this month of October), which should be improved later (after the call).

## 2. Think Tank for China, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### 2.1. Think Tank for China

Arnim presented the new agenda and the main objectives of the Think Tank for China, focused on the realistic goals SGroup intend to achieve. He explained the history of the programme as well as the importance of the workshop in Lisbon, which aimed to make the Think Tank visible and worked as a starting point for its communication. There, the participants were divided in four groups, focusing different topics such as the SGroup partnership policy, the strategy for the workshop in Porto, the Summer School 2018 and the scholarship programme.

He also focused on the importance of recruiting one Chinese associate to join the SGroup. He presented the List of Experts and reemphasized the suggestion made in the Think Tank for Latin America: to create a new platform of search engine. His presentation in Porto had the collaboration of some of these partners, including the Bavarian University Competence for China and the Nordic Centre at Fudan University.

### 2.2. Bavarian University Centre for China (BayChina)

Philipp Dengel presented the Bavarian University for China (BayChina), their funding schemes, and the different services and scholarship programme. BayChina has implemented the Summer School for Intercultural China Studies for the past 10 years, as successful initiative.

João Pedro Pêgo asked about the level of studies the project covers. Most of the participants are bachelor students. Marta Barbosa asked about the scholarships attribution, and Philipp explain that they are targeting Bavarian students that go to China, not the other way around.

### 2.3. China Platform - Ghent University

Barbara Claeys introduced the three regional platforms in Ghent University: the Africa platform, the China platform and the India Platform. They aim to attract students from different regions, but focused on quality rather than quantity.

The main objectives of the China Platform include work as a centre for information and expertise on China, stimulate and facilitate cooperation, and approach regional interactions. By studying in the China platform, students can get the same degree they would get in Ghent. Thanks to social networks and communication in online channels, the platform has increased significantly the number of students applying. There is also a campus in South Korea to encourage



participants from all over Asia, namely China, where the South-Corean government paid the infrastructure.

#### 2.4. Nordic Centre Shanghai

Hilde introduced the Nordic Centre and its main objectives, highlighting that it has developing successful summer courses for 20 years. However, they have been quite oriented to the Fudan University, and she believes they can be open to other universities as well.

It covers four Visa centres to help students engaging in the programme, and it includes internships financed by the industry (which allow the students to work directly in factories and companies to finish their master thesis).

Several participants considered this an excellent example of realistic and achievable goals.

#### 2.5. Partners, Funding Opportunities and Collaboration

Arnim presented a database of collaborators with 47 HEIs, among which he highlighted the University Shanghai International Studies University: SISU.

Maurizio Viezzi referred that Chinese community is now learning other languages besides English. That is why the connection with other regions such as Spain and Latin America appears to be increasingly important. Something that the SGroup, considering its experience in Latin America, may benefit from.

Arnim explained the Erasmus+, Jean Monet and Marie Curie programme, which aims to encourage the research contact areas and support younger researches. Bárbara Costa explained that, in Porto, a different department in the University manages research, but of course, they always cooperate closely with the International Relations Office to develop new projects and ideas.

Focusing on funding opportunities, Arnim also presented the events in Universities that can receive Chinese partners. He mentioned the EURAXESS China, which allows the mobility of Chinese students, and the Dragon star / ERICENA, which provides information about current China programmes and how to apply.

#### 2.6. Summer School in Shanghai

Phillip presented the Summer School as a three-week programme in August. The participants really enjoyed it but were rather exhausted due to its intensity. Therefore, he proposed a four-week course in whole with possibilities for joint travel in the fourth week.

The programme included morning language classes and, in the afternoon, workshops, seminars and excursions. The budget sustained about 30 students per group. In the future, he suggested that the SGroup's Summer School should include one student per each SGroup partner, but it is necessary to find a minimum number to make it work.



SGroup will most probably not provide the financing: Universities and students will pay for it by themselves. Barbara Claeys proposed to add the discussion of this topic to the SGroup General Assembly, and consider the proposal of creating strategic funds to support the Universities.

João Pedro suggested that students from Summer School should receive a certificate in the end. ECTS or other kind of recognition should be available after the programme to make it more attractive.

## 2.7. Joint Degrees

Hilde presented the concept of joint degrees, which started in NTNU in 2010 and required lots of work from Professors. The Norwegian students go to China in the last year of their master, and the Chinese students come to Norway in a 5-year degree. The classes are common to the two parties' degrees. There are some obstacles in logistics, but students consider it an unforgettable experience.

Phillip proposed the implementation of a strategy for benchmarking points, as well as the proper translation of documents to support these initiatives.

## 2.8. Joint Laboratories

Philippe De Maeyer, from Ghent University, explained that there are currently four Joint Laboratories in cooperation with Chinese partner institutions working with Ghent University. The platform provides advice and guidance to the institutions and encourages the cooperation and establishment of agreements. Ghent is the central point of the platform, where the exchange of information happens at the international relations office. Igne Mangelschots is responsible for the collaboration, but there is also a representative in Beijing. Chinese partners are very proud of this initiative, and so is Ghent.

Arnim asked what is included at the Joint Lab Agreements. They include different commitments with information protected by intellectual property rights. João Pedro Pêgo asked if the laboratories are only virtual, and Philippe confirmed.

## 3. Brainstorming

- **Expert meetings**

Twice a year. Proposal for the next meeting: late June (21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>). It is important to define how many people would be at each seminar, including the Executive Members of the University or the Liaison Officers.

- **Think Tank Academy**

Information & Counselling. Includes webinars and online sessions once a year, and a second meeting at the SGroup Liaison Officers Meeting or General Assembly.



- **Joint expert database**

Creation of a new platform with expert's data from different regions, gathering the information of different Think Tanks.

- **Erasmus+ Capability Building**

Curriculum development – Laurent de Potter pointed out the importance of soft skills in developing a new curriculum, and the relevance that a PhD has in the Latin America. Sergio referred the relevance and positive impact of the collaboration with smaller Universities in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, through specific programmes. In the SGroup, we have experience working in this field: for example, the cooperation Liège – Chile and Brazil.

- **Applied Science / Research**

Investment in Health + Environment + Biotechnology

- **Entrepreneurship**

It is important to encourage the entrepreneurship in different regions. Valladolid is working on a project coordinated by the Uppsala University, with South Africa. Mariam will send the details.

- **Knowledge Alliances**

Produce and disseminate knowledge. Sergio presented the case of the University of Las Palmas with Mongolia: the dissemination of results as a way to improve the quality of publications.

Trainer researchers improve the research results. Encouraging the peer review by experts. Professor Maurizio Viezzi, from the University of Trieste, reinforced the importance of improving the sharing of publications, and implement the EU Proof of concept to produce and disseminate knowledge (ex: Trieste + Bayreuth + Romania). Bárbara Costa was available to analyse this idea and its availability to be implemented.

Arnim pointed out the importance of setting realistic objectives and opening publishing opportunities, with funds to translate the publications to English.

- **Specialized Universities**

The SGroup is mostly composed of comprehensive HEIs and it may be interesting to analyse the inclusion of specialized Universities (arts, music, etc.), which could bring a new perspective to the group.

- **Create a list with region HE-events**

List the regional HE-events considered being of good quality and worth participating in. Identify the SGroup members attending presently and that are already supported by their respective universities.



### **Latin America – Plan of Activities 2018**

- **Implementation of the ICon Programme**

Scholarships for FAUBAI mentors during the second semester 2017/2018.

- **FAUBAI 2018**

Bárbara Costa and Arnim proposed two different sessions: *How to build an internationalization strategy?* and *Innovation Tools*. The Brazilian institutions are now increasingly interested in getting information about internationalization opportunities and processes. Jorge even told that few years ago some Erasmus students from Brazil went on mobility in Europe without a learning agreement. They didn't get recognition or academic equivalences. Bárbara Costa will talk with people from FAUBAI about science and publications in English.

- **EAIE 2018**

Barbara Claeys, Bárbara Costa and Arnim presented a proposal of candidacy for the panel, under the theme "Going global together – joint regional competence of University Networks", which should be sent until 3<sup>rd</sup> November. It should not focus in a specific region, but on platforms development towards capability. Eg: Ghent Regional Platform.

- **Student fairs in Latin America**

Arnim proposed the creation of a strategy for the SGroup to participate in events in Latin America. Consider the possibility of focusing in specific regions in LA (Argentina, in February; Cuban Conferences...). Universities can share booths or SGroup could participate with a brochure with all the Universities – the focus should be on the excellence of the members, not on the Association itself.

### **China – Plan of Activities 2018**

- **Summer School**

Proposal of a 4 weeks programme in late July and / or August.

- **New associate members**

FUDAN will be approached further with the support of NTNU and the Nordic Centre, in order to get them on board.

SGroup may not be so rigid with the rules and rights applied to the Associate members (vote, full participation, etc.).